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DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BASHIR ADDRESSES EL FASHER

¶1. (SBU) For the first time in over a year, President Bashir traveled to Darfur and delivered a speech in El Fasher July 23, declaring the government's commitment to peace and economic development in Darfur. Addressing a crowd of thousands at an event with a heavy security presence, Bashir acknowledged that "injustices had occurred in Darfur," but affirmed the government's dedication to making peace, as it has done in other parts of the country. He pointed to the CPA as the "greatest achievement in Sudan since independence." He avowed a commitment to security for refugees and IDPs to return to their villages and to demonstrate this, he announced the return of 1,000 families to their homes. He praised the people of Darfur for their wisdom and asserted the government's willingness to bring together political and tribal leaders, whether signatories or not, for a peaceful coexistence.

¶2. (SBU) Parallel to his message of peace, Bashir also pledged to continue to develop Darfur, promising investment in infrastructure for water, electricity, health, education, and agriculture. Specifically, he asserted that construction of the "Western Salvation Road" would be completed; the electricity grid would be expanded to Darfur through Kordofan; and exploration would commence for petroleum and mineral resources. He declared that wealth from such natural resources would serve to enrich the people of Darfur and not foreign interests trying to exploit Sudan. Bashir also declared a commitment to implement justice in Darfur, and stated that Sudan believes in God and answers only to God. He urged that the ICC thus not serve as a distraction. He blamed enemies of Sudan for continually trying to thwart Sudan's progress and disrupt peace both in Darfur and the South, but vowed that they would not succeed.

¶3. (SBU) Although President Bashir's speech was moderate, other speakers denounced the ICC indictment against President Bashir, and made numerous inflammatory remarks against the United States and Israel. One such speaker referred to President Bush as a "war criminal", at which point CDA Fernandez walked out in protest.

¶4. (SBU) Following the public event, President Bashir met with a delegation of IDPs behind closed doors. Following the meeting, some of the IDP representatives told CDA that they have no problem accepting Bashir as president, "but what is important are deeds and not words." They demanded action on compensation, security, and development. They felt Bashir's speech was positive, but was "nothing new." President Bashir also met privately with JSR Adada, FC Agwai, and SRSQ Qazi. Read-outs of these meetings will follow via septel.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Although Bashir's trip to Darfur has attracted a great deal of attention and is calculated to demonstrate that the president is eager to find solutions to the Darfur crisis, Bashir unfortunately offered little new. Absent a radical departure from this policy of gradualism, the situation on the ground in Darfur is unlikely to change and the president is unlikely to gain support for a deferment in the ICC indictment.

